

United Way 211 for North Central Florida

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June 5, 2007

Commission's Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554
Subject: Designation of 2-1-1 and 5-1-1 as abbreviated dialing codes
CC Docket NO. 92- 105

United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida hereby submits its Reply Comments to Public Notice DA 07-2017, released May 7, 2007. The Public Notice requested comments on the status of implementation of the 211 and 511 Dialing Codes. Further, the Public Notice requested comments on actions the Commission should take if these Dialing Codes are not widely used. United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida is limiting its comments to the status of 2-1-1 service in Florida.

United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida employs three full-time and one part-time permanent staff. The helpline has provided quality information and referral services to the area since 1976. In February, 2006, the helpline began providing 2-1-1 service to over 320,000 citizens in Alachua, Bradford, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy and Union Counties in North Central Florida, using a database of 389 service providers and 730 programs to make referrals. Since launching 2-1-1 service, United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida has received nearly 30,000 calls.

The most common reasons clients call United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida is to find help to meet basic material needs such as rent/mortgage, utility assistance and food, to learn about government services, and to access affordable mental health services. In addition to collecting data about the types of calls we get and referrals that we make, we also gather information about unmet needs in our community. This information, in the form of an Annual Report, is shared with community leaders and planners, as well as the general public via our Web site at www.unitedwayncfl.org. We forge connections between people in need and resources, as well as between volunteers and donors and the opportunities they are seeking to make a positive impact. "My sister who is in a wheelchair has come to live with me and we have no ramp", laments one caller. We contact our local Center for Independent Living and arrange for a ramp to be built through a new program they have. "The devil broke my fan belt and I am stranded on I-75", cries another. A few phone calls later, a volunteer from a local ministry is on his way to her aid. 24 hours a day, every day, voices call out, "I need food", "my kids need school supplies", "Do you know of an agency that would like a truckload of cantaloupes?" No matter what the question or problem, trained Specialists at United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida listen actively, respond with appropriate referrals, advocate for callers when necessary and provide follow-up as needed.

During the devastating hurricane seasons of 2004 and 2005, our I&R service, not yet a 2-1-1, provided information, referrals and support to the community as our call volume more than doubled.



MEMBER
AIRS (Alliance of Information & Referral)
FLAIRS (Florida Alliance of Information & Referral Systems)
Florida 211 Network

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We joined with other United Way staff to coordinate the efforts of volunteers to distribute ice, food and water and remove debris. Thanks to our long-standing relationship with the Alachua County Crisis Center and excellent relationship with the Emergency Management offices in the counties we serve, our service continued uninterrupted and we were blessed with a steady flow of up to date information to share. We are proud of what we were able to do, but we most assuredly could have reached so many more people, especially in our rural areas, if our 2-1-1 number had been in place.

United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida is a deeply rooted and integral part of the community it serves. Our partners, which include the Alachua County Crisis Center, the University of Florida and Santa Fe Community College as well as public schools, other information and referral services, social service agencies and libraries throughout our areas have contributed significant time and resources to make 2-1-1 a reality here. United Way 2-1-1 is a community initiative that is making a real impact right here in North Central Florida.

We are deeply grateful to the Commission for making 2-1-1 available to us, and respectfully request that the Commission find the public is well-served by the use of 2-1-1. We ask that the Commission continue to support the 2-1-1 Dialing Code for this purpose, and that the Commission use its' authority to facilitate more widespread use of this valuable service.

Sincerely,

Jan Zak, Program Director
United Way 2-1-1 for North Central Florida